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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined the relationship between principals' behaviors and faculty commitment to collaborative action research are presented in this paper. Methodology focused on the actions of six elementary, middle, and high school principals who participated in Project LEARN, a collaborative action outreach service of Washington State University, Vancouver. Data were obtained from onsite observations and faculty interviews and surveys. Findings suggest that the principals' leadership behaviors had a primary influence on their schools' organizational cultures and the level of professional discourse. Principals who successfully created transformation in their teachers created partnerships with them in pursuit of teaching and learning and rewarded professionalism. Successful collaborative inquiry is enhanced by a manageable school size, the availability of mentoring opportunities, and administrators who understand the impact of organizational culture on teacher commitment. Four tables and one figure are included. (Contains 29 references.) (LMI)

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Institutionalizing Collaborative Action Research:

The Role of Leadership

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Running Head: INSTITUTIONALZING COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH

EA 024 401

Portions of this paper have been adapted from previous work.

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Introduction

For three years Project LEARN (The League of Educational Action Researchers in the Northwest) an outreach service of Washington State University Vancouver, has been helping local school faculties to develop the technical skills for conducting collaborative action research. Currently more than 50 schools have completed the Project LEARN training program. In most cases their action research projects have been brought to completion. In a number of these schools collaborative action research eventually flourished and became an integral part of the cultural fabric of the professional community. However, in other schools the process of action research simply passed through like a spring storm, neither effecting practice nor the professional culture in any meaningful way.

Earlier studies (Sagor 1990, Sagor and Curley 1991) sought to identify the factors which seemed to support or hinder the continuation and/or incorporation of this type of professional role enhancement. Three key variables: A clear school focus, a shared perspective on organizational culture, and the strength of a construct we called "Press for improvement" were shown to correlate with the continuation or abandonment of collaborative action research projects. This study seeks to explore more deeply the phenomena of "press for improvement."

In earlier work we found evidence which appeared to validate Michael Fullen's (1986) assertion that to sustain improvement it was necessary for leadership to simultaneously apply the correct amount of pressure and support. To better understand how school leaders attempt to accomplish this we have chosen to look at the behavior of two sets of school principal's. One group presides over schools where collaborative inquiry has become institutionalized and where the "press for improvement" was evidenced by faculty self-reports. The other group consists of administratorswho work in schools where the "press for improvement"is absent and where the collaborative action research process was abandoned

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore and categorize the specific behaviors engaged in by school leaders that might contribute to a faculty's willingness and desire to continuously engage in "collaborative action research." For this study we are operationally defining "institutionalized collaborative action research" as the process of "regularly and collectively inquiring into the quality of one's work and then taking action informed by the results of those inquiries." The research for this paper has been guided by the following questions:

1) Are there common leadership behaviors exhibited by principals in schools that have incorporated collaborative action research into the school's professional culture? and

2) How do these behaviors differ from those exhibited by principals in other schools which have dropped or rejected the collaborative action research process?

Theoretical Framework:

Our research is informed by the body of management literature that demonstrates a leadership influence over worker motivation. Specifically the work of Hertzberg (1968) and Vroom (1964) which suggests that management can exert significant influence over the motivational factors that influence worker investment. Similarly, we are influenced by work of Schien (1985), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Peters and Waterman (1982), Peters and Austin (1985) and Sergiovanni (1990) who have argued persuasively that leadership expresses and actualizes its influence most powerfully through the development and management of organizational culture.

In earlier work (Sagor 1991) data was reported supporting the assertion that collaborative action research was a technology which could provide teachers with the feelings of efficacy found to be instrumental in teacher motivation (Ashton and Webb 1986), (Rosenholtz 1989). In schools which incorporated collaborative action research into their normal mode of operation we documented the presence of the twin norms of

experimentation and collegiality that Judith Warren Little (1982) found essential to promoting school effectiveness.

Those perspectives bring us to the brink of the critical question guiding this work: What is it that allows some principals to take advantage of a strategy (collaborative action research) which has been shown to produce greater job satisfaction and performance, while others cannot?

Point of View

It has become common for principals to espouse their commitment to the values of teacher empowerment, site-based leadership and the professionalization of teaching. In that regard there has been little difference among the principals attracted to this initiative over the years. However, we have found that there is a difference between espousing a theory Z orientation (Ouchi 1981) and actually behaving in a manner that causes followers to take charge of creating the "knowledge that informs their practice." We realized that if action research was to become institutionalized in K-12 education then school faculties must manifest a "felt need" (Berman and McLaughlin 1974) to initiate the data collection that would ultimately inform their professional actions.

It is clear from our earlier work that a critical element in getting practitioners to take charge of the quality control function was the behavior of their leaders. Burns discussed the impact of leaders on this type of deep follower development as transformational leadership (Burns 1978). It is our perspective that the institutionalization of collaborative action research by teachers occurs only where transformational leadership is provided. Although there is significant weight of opinion supporting the value of transformational leadership, we lack rich descriptions of the work of such leaders in school settings. In a recent paper reviewing the literature on leadership, William Greenfield (1991) concluded that researchers need to add to the knowledge base by helping to distinguish "between": 1) the personal qualities associated with the ability to lead in a school, 2) the actual behaviors constitutive of the

activity of leading, 3) the intermediate aims of those leadership behaviors (changes in norms organizational policies, procedures, and processes and activities stimulated by the leader which fosters the identification and solution of problems interfering with the school's effectiveness), and 4) the outcomes and effects of leadership.

This paper is an effort to build the knowledge base Greenfield called for. It does so by documenting the behavior of six principals who have been leading schools involved in a teacher centered school development process for up to three years.

It is the perspective of this work that teacher empowerment is and will be a critical component of any viable school development strategy. Furthermore, it accepts the fact that administrators, even in the most bureaucratic environments, cannot effectively compel teacher compliance against their will (Blase 1989 and Lortie 1975). Therefore, we contend that meaningful school development cannot and will not occur in the absence of transformational leadership. While transactional leadership might bring greater efficiency to an organization, assisting a faculty to strive for an achieve higher purposes requires the triggering of a developmental and transformational experience (Glickman 1990).

The nature of a transformative relationship is that it moves both the leader and follower to new understandings and improved behavior. While the transformational principal may be having a transformative effect on children and parents the purpose of the present study is to identify the means these leaders use to create transformation on the part of their subordinates. Specifically, the transformation we are exploring is the incorporation of collaborative inquiry into the central and internalized work role of the K-12 teacher.

Methods

All six subject schools are involved with an initiative of Washington State University-Vancouver, Project LEARN. In each of these schools practitioner research projects have been underway for several years. These projects were initiated by

classroom teachers who after identifying areas of common concern committed themselves to the conduct of collaborative research on issues concerning their own practice. In spite of the high degree of teacher control over these site-based improvement efforts, earlier research (Sagor 1991, Sagor and Curley 1991) found evidence that the school principal still played a crucial role in inspiring, sustaining, and supporting these efforts.

In our earlier work, teachers were first asked to report on their principal's behavior in fostering the particular modes of professional discourse cited as significant by Judith Warren Little (1982): discussions about teaching and learning, critiquing of professional work, and the collaborative preparation of materials and lessons. In addition they were asked to discuss their principal's work in regard to the behaviors cited by Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) as characteristic of transformational leaders, e.g. using procedures to reinforce shared values and beliefs, fostering professional development conducting discussions on educational values and beliefs, sharing power and responsibility. That data pointed out some clear distinctions between the behavior of some project principals.

This paper examines the work of six principals (three elementary, one middle and two high school). The goal is to deeply describe those specific behaviors that appear to support a transformative impact on followers. The variety of exploratory qualitative methodologies used were chosen due to a belief that leadership is first identified and best understood through the words and perspectives of those being led, rather than through an examination of the intentions of the leaders themselves. For this reason faculty interviews and written surveys were used to generate a composite of the organizational features of schools where principal leadership was appreciated by teachers and deemed to be effective in sustaining collaborative action research. Later shadowing, interviewing and observational data was used to flesh out and categorize those specific behaviors that appeared to support the institutionalization of that

collaborative work. The full data set for this paper includes material obtained in our earlier work as well as material gathered through additional observation and focused interviews with faculty, and the principals themselves.

The Schools

Why do some schools succeed when other fails" This is the questions that has driven school reform for generations. In recent years the view that a school's organizational structure and culture are major determinants of schools effectiveness has gained increased attention. In particular the trend to devolve power and decision making to those closest to the action and consequently to expand the discretion given to classroom teachers are directions that are gaining significant popularity and are beginning to show some promising results. However, increasingly we are seeing that decentralization alone does not improve schools, as evidenced by the experience in Dade County (Collins and Hanson 1991). Specifically granting teachers power over their work does not in and of itself increase their reliance on data and commitment to conduct systematic inquiry into the effectiveness of their practice.

As important as shared decision making and teacher empowerment are, they are unlikely to improve schools absent the development of teacher desire to participate in the quality control function of their schools. Clearly, the issue is more than simply deciding who is going to make which decisions. Rather, it is finding a way to be successful in defining and gaining agreement on the essential purpose of teaching and learning and then assisting practitioners to be focused and analytical about their practice. It has been found that in schools where this type of meaningful "focus" has been achieved, teaching staffs are more likely to continue to engage in action research (Glickman 1990), (Sagor and Curley 1991).

When schools institutionalized collaborative action research we consistently found an effective leader in the principalship. While the outward styles of those leaders varied, similarities in the impact of their work was generally found in three specific

features of their schools: the sharpness of school focus, the sharing of common cultural perspectives, and a constant push for improvement. Conversely, in schools were action research was short-lived, the focus was diffuse, perceptions of culture were widely disparate, and a productive push for improvement was absent (Sagor & Curley 1991). Because of the predictive value of these factors we began to call them the wake left behind the boat of transformational leadership.

Three Key Markers

Where transformational educational leaders practice one expects to find increased teacher professionalism. For this study, professionalism will be defined as the incorporation of the behaviors identified by Little (1982) into the regular teaching work role. We believe that it is the consistent participation in those professional work roles that produces the above mentioned "wake of transformational leadership" with its three salient features, school focus, cultural collinearity, and press for improvement. Because of the value of these factors in predicting the presence of empowering leadership it is now worth reviewing those key factors.

Focus.

Perhaps no idea has captured more attention in the discussion of leadership than the importance of vision (Bennis and Nanus 1985, Blumberg and Greenfield 1986). While not wishing to diminish the importance of that concept, we are concerned with the way it may be interpreted by many leaders. Frequently, in the staff development programs offered for school administrators, potential leaders are lead to believe that their primary role is to develop and articulate a personal vision to guide organizational work. They may well walk away from training sessions believing that administrators are expected to be successful salespeople with masses of followers pledging allegiance to their personal vision. Adherence to that view reduces the role of the follower (teacher) to a mere pawn to the leaders (principal's) superior wisdom. That perspective will be

unlikely to transform the teaching role in ways that would foster and sustain developmental change like collaborative inquiry.

One factor which has been shown to help semi-autonomous professionals to cooperatively accomplish complex tasks is commitment to a clear and common focus (Peters and Waterman, 1982). While followers need to be partners in the development of such a focus, its creation doesn't occur through spontaneous generation. Rather, leadership serves as the medium through which the collective yearnings of a group of empowered professionals can take form and give direction for both group and individual inquiry.

Cultural collinearity.

Psychologists use a term, cognitive collinearity, to describe the similarity of thinking among individuals. While "group think" is clearly not conducive to productive organizational performance, another form of unity does seem helpful in sustaining collaborative action research. It is sharing a common perspective on the prevailing organization culture. We asked teachers to use a four point likert type scale to rate the following 14 elements of their school culture which have been shown to influence performance (adapted from Saphier and King, 1983):

1) Collegiality
2) Experimentation
3) High Expectations
4) Trust and Confidence
5) Tangible Support
6) Reaching out to the Knowledge Base
7) Appreciation and Recognition
8) Caring, Celebration, and Humor
9) Appreciation of Leadership
10) Clarity of School Goals

11) Protection of What's Important

12) Involvement in Decision Making

13) Traditions

14) Honest, Open communication

In schools where high inter-rater reliability (SD<.75) was obtained on the perception of organizational culture, school improvement seemed to proceed more readily. It is important to note that this measure did not indicate the degree to which a faculty valued the same cultural components, rather it indicated only if they were seeing their organization the same way. Figure #1 indicates the scores of the six schools on our measure of cultural collinearity. The percentages are the ratio of norms where the faculty ratings had the standard deviations below .75 over the total number of norms rated. Schools 1-3 were the ones which sustained their research efforts and schools 4-6 were the ones which abandoned this work.

Insert Table 1 about here

In divided faculties, ones where teachers disagree on issues such as the degree of collegiality amongst the staff, or the appreciation of experimentation, or the presence of high expectations, academic performance was likely to be declining. Apparently, to be a venue where collaborative inquiry thrives, it is important for members of the organization to share a common perspective in the social system of which they are participants.

Press for improvement.

Michael Fullan (1986) wrote of the importance of the simultaneous application of pressure and support when trying to sustain educational change. Our data lent support to this proposition. We studied schools where the district and building administration had provided significant financial and emotional support, yet

innovation was not sustained and the direction of improvement was disappointing. At the same time, we observed other schools, occasionally receiving less support, that were sustaining initiative while making impressive performance gains. Likewise, we occasionally encountered setting where expectations for performance were high, yet the performance itself was low. Leadership appeared to be successful only when it was able to provide just the right combination of pressure for improvement with support for the improvement initiatives themselves.

In three of the subject schools, the faculties reported sharp focus, high levels of cultural collinearity and a leadership press for improvement. The other three had more diffuse profiles. Figure #2 shows the profile of the six schools across all three key dimensions.

Insert Table 2 about here

Having identified these three markers as the "wake of transformational leadership" our task turned to an examination of the specific and discriminating patterns of principal behavior.

Discussion

The principals at Riverview Elementary, Bedrock Elementary, and Wilton Middle School presented disparate leadership styles yet all three produced similar results. In the wake of their leadership we observed focused schools, common cultural perspectives, transformed professionals and institutionalized action research. However, at LaBelle Elementary, Milltown High School, and Linberg High School the school's cultural profiles were weak, faculty morale appeared lower, and collaborative action research hadn't been sustained.

When field notes were coded we found that the three principals at the schools with institutionalized action research shared specific leadership behaviors: e.g., each

principal endeavored to visit each classroom at least once each day, each practiced active listening and each discussed teaching with his/her faculty as though it were an experimental science. In all three of these schools the faculty felt empowered, so much so that at Wilton teachers even commented that they could function quite well even without a principal. In each of these schools the faculty took responsibility for the school's focus, even if the principal was credited with giving it voice, support and strength. Even though the faculty chose directions that were consistent with the leaders vision, the faculties at these schools didn't report feeling manipulated into adopting their principal's perspective.

At LaBelle, Milltown, and Linberg the principals possessed equally clear visions for their schools, yet these principals had been far less successful in bringing clarity to the school's purpose or creating faculty unity around a focus.

At the three schools that had institutionalized collaborative inquiry similar mechanisms were used to foster common understandings of the culture. While large meetings and public symbolic actions played a part, the most significant cultural work was accomplished through one to one personal interaction. The combination of focused effort and systematic collection of data allowed teachers in these schools to feel efficacious. Consequently, they were observed voluntarily working long hours for only the intrinsic rewards of teaching.

By contrast, at the other three schools an array of strategies was used to pull the faculty together, although none appeared to be particularly successful. At LaBelle the principal, Mary Jean, placed an emphasis on process skill development. Being a counselor herself, she tried to bring her faculty together with a mix of group therapy and organizational development techniques. At Milltown High School, the principal favored the technique of using large group meetings to discuss the overarching and significant issues of secondary school restructuring. By contrast, at Linberg the principal chose a strategy that emphasized autonomy and decentralized group work to

be carried out in departments without much if any administrative input. These approaches produced improved human relations at LaBelle (but less focus on student issues), considerable resentment and feelings of manipulation at Milltown, and a deeply divided faculty at Linberg.

At Riverview, Bedrock and Wilton we observed principals applying pressure through the continuous asking of probing questions which went to the heart of the teaching/learning process. Yet, in each case, these principals balanced this pressure with enough meaningful personal support to create a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty.

At the other schools either the pressure or the support were lacking. At LaBelle the counseling/human relations orientation provided ample support but there was not enough perceived pressure to focus the faculty on the pressing issues of student learning. At Milltown the staff reported feeling considerable pressure to actualize the principal's agenda but felt they weren't receiving enough personal consideration or support to carry it out. Finally, the autonomy experienced by the Linberg faculty provided them with neither the requisite support nor pressure to sustain institutional changes beyond the boundaries of one's classroom.

We now needed to examine the particular patterns of behavior that discriminated between these two types of leaders.

Patterns and Themes

It seems logical that a role for leadership in a school that is institutionalizing collaborative action research is providing and maintaining meaningful opportunities for professional discourse on matters of professional practice. It is through the fostering of continuous professional interaction on the critical issues concerning teaching and learning that leaders are able to plant the seeds of inquiry. When searching for themes that cut across or differentiated the experience of these faculties and their leaders, it became apparent that the successful leaders transformed their

followers through their mediating influence on organizational culture. In a sense, it appeared that the role of the transformational leader in these schools (Riverview, Bedrock, and Wilton) lied in the provision of repeated opportunities for professional discourse. It is through this fostering of professional interaction on issues of teaching and learning that these leaders stimulated transformational development.

The end sought by transformation leadership in a professional setting is demonstrable growth and improvement in both the performance and perspectives held by followers (Burns, 1978). However, as Burns points out, transformational leaders operate in a dynamic two way relationship with their followers, resulting in reciprocal development for both leader and follower.

Those insights lead us to construct a theoretical model of the manner in which the leader causes transformation in the follower. Figure #1illustrates this model.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In order to see how leaders do this we have sifted through our data searching for themes that distinguished the leadership in the three schools which had succeeded with the implementation of collaborative inquiry from those which hadn't. When we did, it became apparent that the three successful leaders had transformed their faculty by influencing the organizational culture via the facilitation of the professional dialogue. This influence appeared to be exerted in three stages. These principals worked all three stages at once, although their leadership behavior was experienced sequentially by each follower. Stage #1, the "pre-conditional stage" is where leaders establish a safe and secure platform for dialogue. This "initiation" stage involves the behaviors engaged in by leaders which free teachers for participation in risk taking initiatives such as collaborative action research. Stage #2, "development/implementation" is where we saw leaders initiating and participating in discourse and program development in a

manner that was, at the same time, supportive while not controlling. In this stage principals engage in behavior which helps their faculty through the hard work of implementing a new initiative (such as the conduct of collaborative action research). The third level of leadership involvement was the "sustaining stage." It is here that the three successful leaders found ways to reinforce and support those faculty priorities that grew from collaborative professional inquiry. In this final stage the leaders utilized their leadership to keep up momentum and to reinforce the continuation of new and innovative practices.

Table #3 illustrates the 18 most significant categories of coded behavior and the three stages where they were most frequently found.

Insert Table 3 about here

Certain of these behaviors cut across all three stages while others were more functionally related to a particular stage.

For example, the "buffering" of teachers from distracting district and state agendas seemed to be an essential pre-condition for focused discourse. However, this leadership function of "buffering" was also frequently needed throughout the development/implementation process. Another example was the strategic use of humor. This strategy assists followers in becoming comfortable at the time when discourse is initiated, yet it also releases tension during those more stressful periods of development/implementation.

What is important to note is that the pattern of these behaviors was distinctly different with those leaders who operated in the buildings where action research had taken hold, as with those working in the buildings where it had been suspended. Behaviors were coded as being part of a principal's repertoire if two researchers independently observed the behavior or had it directly reported to them by faculty

members. Table #4 reports the distribution of these observed behaviors across the eighteen dimensions.

Insert Table 4 about here

Stage #1: Pre-conditional behavior.

Although their methods were different, the three principals whose faculties sustained action research consistently engaged in behavior which were effective in setting the stage for professional discourse. For example they had each mastered what could be described as "effortlessly taking care of business." Each of these principals were excellent managers, and in fact they each spent considerable time and energy looking after the everyday management tasks. However, the sweat and tears this required were generally hidden from the eye of the casual observer. Each principal was repeatedly observed doing two or three things at the same time. Be it signing purchase orders while talking on the phone, or scribbling notes for their secretary while supervising an activity. In each case it would appear to an observer that the management tasks were of little consequence, could be easily interrupted, and weren't absorbing a great deal of time or energy.

What was important was that these staffs viewed their schools as well managed, thereby freeing the faculty for concentration on other, more important, professional matters. These principals were able to provide efficient management without appearing to pay a cost in terms of their zero sum attention.

In addition, these principals were effective in taking care of the tough personnel issues. During the course of this study each of these three leaders had occasion to remove at least one staff member who wasn't pulling their weight or who was standing against the group. However, in each case it was handled in a manner that was at the

same time efficient, respectful of the employee, and minimally disruptive to the culture and climate of the work place.

Each was a disseminator of research. All three found different ways to place reprints and summaries of pertinent professional articles in the hands of the right people. Their casual and matter of fact methods of dissemination (Laura at Riverview had her own newsletter, Nora at Bedrock used faculty mailboxes and Clyde at Wilton passed out pertinent articles personally) were viewed by teachers as a service provided by the principal and weren't seen as a form of advocacy. Those inferences serve as a testament to the relaxed style of these principals, even if it obscured the actual intent of the leader. All three principals came to these schools with well developed educational philosophies and the reading material they chose to distribute usually served to inform others of the underpinnings of their philosophies.

These three principals were completely conversant with relevant data on the performance of their schools, faculties, and students. They took in information like "data omnivorous," yet they shared data discriminantly. Conversations with these three leaders never felt like a data dump. Rather their thorough knowledge of relevant performance data enabled them to facilitate meaningful faculty discussion.

All three leaders appeared to have eagle eyes for grants and other funding opportunities which could advance the objectives of their school and faculty. While the work was not easy in any of these three schools, faculty members rarely reported feeling abused by the principal's high expectations. Much of this was attributed to the extramural support the principals were seen as providing. In actuality the hours spent at work by the teachers in the successful buildings was well in excess of the norm at the other three sites.

Finally, all three principals, in a variety of ways conveyed a strong sense of caring for those students, staff, and parents who were part of their school community. Public and private acts of caring, ranging from hugging a child in the halls, to

supporting a faculty member going through a divorce showed these leaders to be a people with big hearts.

The consequences of this set of pre-conditional behaviors was a school culture which served as a foundation or a springboard for development.

In contrast, at Milltown, LaBelle and Linberg the picture was quite different. Those principals weren't overly effective at buffering for their staff. At each of these schools the researchers were treated to numerous diatribes on the oppressive demands continuously emanating from the central administration and from the parent community. While George at Linberg, the principal who emphasized autonomy, appeared quite relaxed and to have mastered "easily taking care of business" both Maryjean at LaBelle and Jeff at Milltown frequently seemed overwhelmed by the mounds of administrativia that accumulated on their desks. While George and Jeff spent considerable time analyzing data on school performance, they used this data in a much different manner than the three successful principals. While at Wilton, Bedrock, and Riverview data was used as a stimulus for growth, at Milltown and Linberg teachers felt it was used to "bash" the faculty. We were frequently regaled with stories about the time Jeff distributed reports on the failing grades awarded by teachers complete with smiling faces by the names of some teachers and frowny faces by others. Similarly, the homework survey that was to be the hallmark of Linberg's first action research project was perceived as part of George's master plan to celebrate certain departments over others. George and Jeff were seldom seen visiting classrooms or working with kids in instructional environments so they missed out on opportunities to be seen modeling. Furthermore, by staying away from the teachers they found fewer opportunities to exhibit caring. On the other hand Maryjean, with her counseling orientation, was seen frequently rolling up her sleeves and working with kids and showing caring for the staff. All three of these principals (like their successful counterparts) were effective in securing resources for their schools. However, at LaBelle, Milltown, and Linberg those

efforts didn't result in the appreciation that we heard regularly expressed at the other schools.

Stage #2: Development/implementation.

The work of the three successful principals at stage two, the time when active engagement in professional discourse was occurring, was in some respects the most surprising. All three clearly were acknowledged by their teachers as having "expert authority," however, their participation in professional dialogue was hardly ever authoritative. Rather, they each behaved as educators coming to the school with a vision, but without an agenda, and they then found ways to become partners in the teaching/learning process even when not having a classroom of their own.

Riverview, Bedrock, and Wilton were not large schools, neither could they be characterized as small (they ranged between 300-500 students). Nevertheless it appeared that each of these principals was intimately knowledgeable about all the school programs and the progress made by each individual student. This fact became clear when the principals were shadowed. Typically they would make two to three visits to each classroom every day. It was rare to see a reaction when they entered a room. Their presence had become routine. Once in a classroom it was customary for the principal to bend over students and engage in discussion about the work or to pitch right in and contribute to the instruction. Only through these daily intimate interactions with program and students could a principal so comfortably engage in instructional discussions. Frequently, we observed these principals engaging teachers in a discussion regarding a particular student's progress in front of that student and his peers. When this was observed it seemed to be for purposes of positive reinforcement. Beyond the reward value for the student, it appeared that these teachers and principals were partners in the student's education as well as the school program. Those regular and repeated interactions with instructional issues conveyed legitimacy on the principal as an instructional leader. Therefore, when he or she later became involved

in discourse concerning crucial issues of teaching and learning it wasn't seen as interference.

The seemingly omnipresence of these principals provided them with additional opportunities which supported their leadership. They were regularly observed "pitching in" and "supporting teacher's work." Occasionally we would code the same behavior in both categories. For example, when Nora elected to supervise the doorway prior to the opening of school, she was not only helping with student control, but, she told us she was helping preserve the sanctity of teacher planning time.

"Pitching in" behavior was more than modeling, it truly built a sense of solidarity with followers. For example, during a homeroom session a student came into the hallway and pulled Clyde into his classroom in order to explain the school's homework policy which the teacher was apparently unwilling to do. He cheerfully pitched in, while another principal might have asked the teacher to take care of it himself. These principals made it a habit of offering to cover classes so teachers could attend to other professional matters.

Each saw their major management function as "supporting teacher work" and in most cases this translated to helping in the management of available time and assisting with student problems. For example, Laura recently crafted a schedule which provided each grade level team with two uninterrupted hours per week for group planning. During one observation we saw Nora re-working the teacher aide schedule because the fourth and fifth grade team had an impetuous change of heart regarding their preferred reading time. When asked if she was upset about all the extra work that resulted from this flippant change of heart, she shrugged her shoulders and simply told us that it was her job to make the schedule work for teachers. Finally, "supporting teacher work" was demonstrated in the ability of these principals to provide staff development opportunities for their teachers. When it appeared no money was

available, they were still able to find a way to send the right staff member to the appropriate workshop or visitation.

One overarching behavior that we observed each of these leaders engaging in was a practice we called, "flexible determinism." Flexible-determinism refers to a mode of goal-focused leadership. It differs from "situational leadership" (Fiedler 1967) in one significant way. Situational leadership generally presumes that the leader is committed to getting the follower to accept a particular expectation, and the leader is willing to tailor his/her methods in consideration of context and individual differences. Such an approach views the leader as a manipulator. The leader is thereby viewed as employing stimulus-response techniques to getting the follower to pursue the leader's goal.

Flexible determinism, on the other hand, presumes that the leader is in possession of a vision and the leader may even have a significant emotional and ideological commitment to that vision. For these reasons the leader would clearly like to have his vision realized. However, a "flexible/determined" leader recognizes that the primary goal is not the realization of the personal vision per se, rather it is the development of the school. Therefore, when the road to the vision is running counter to the predisposition of the followers the leader becomes flexible in goals, outcomes and methods. We observed several examples of "flexible/determined" behavior with the three successful leaders.

Nora was not committed to implementing multi-age grouping schooling, although she saw much merit in that approach. Rather her goal was to develop a school where the faculty would work together to serve the interests of children and families. Had the Bedrock faculty been unwilling to pursue this child centeredness through multi-age grouping (which they ultimately did) Nora declared she would have accepted it. A similar, although less significant, example was observed when one of Nora's teaching teams requested to change the format for "curriculum night" the day before the

event. While the deviation they proposed ran counter to the pre-announced plan and Nora's desire for the evening (they were proposing that Nora address the parents in a large group, rather than have the teachers orient the parents in small groups in the classrooms), Nora was clearly willing to accommodate the request. In this case, her "determination" was to the pursuit of child and parent service, while she was willing to exercise great "flexibility" when it came to the logistics of the delivery system.

Another illustration was observed with Clyde. Prior to coming to Wilton he lead two schools in the de-tracking process. Yet he seemed sincere when he confided to us that he would never have pursued that route with any faculty "if he didn't have the votes." Once he had "the votes" at Wilton they moved ahead to eliminate 20 years of tracking. "Flexible determinists" apparently intuitively understand the difference between battles, skirmishes and wars. They are determined to prevail with school and teacher development, yet they are maximally flexible about the means to accomplish this.

However, the most interesting and consistent behavior in the development/implementation stage was the apparent unwillingness of these leaders to become the voice of educational authority. As mentioned above, these three leaders were viewed by most of their teachers as knowledgeable, perhaps even visionary, yet one wouldn't know it from listening to the discourse within the building. When important matters were under discussion, we rarely heard one of these principals directly answer a question on an instructional or pedagogical issue. They were more likely to be "asking a question" of the teacher, or "answering a question with a question." Their willingness to be someone who "does not know it all" was not a sanctioning of ignorance, rather it fostered a collaborative search for understanding.

Each of the principals readily granted credit for school improvement to factors outside of themselves. We noticed that our Action Research Project became a choice target for attribution. We suspect that the project was a favored mechanism because it

supported strategies that each of these leaders already valued. The goal of our collaborative action research project was to encourage faculty members to regularly engage in data driven discourse on priority issues of teaching and learning. That aim was clearly consonant with Laura, Clyde, and Nora's preferred method of leading. Affiliating with Project LEARN was for them another logical tactic to further their transformative instincts.

In contrast, with George's laid back, autonomous style we observed none of the seven "developmental/implementation" behaviors. He wasn't around to "pitch in," to be a "visual presence," or to be asking the "probing questions." Furthermore, while the freedom he granted faculty implied flexibility, his near total lack of direction telegraphed an absence of determination. Jeff, on the other hand, was so driven to achieve his vision that he was clearly and pervasively perceived as "determined" so much so that his teachers never saw him demonstrating the "flexibility" that marked our observations of the three successful leaders. While he was visible (many faculty described him as a workaholic) and he regularly challenged the faculty with questions, the questions were perceived as critical rather than probative in nature.

Maryjean's "developmental/implementation" behavior profile appeared more like that of the successful principals than like George and Jeff. Her sensitivity to communication skills and the nuances of human relations resulted in behavior patterns remarkably similar to Clyde, Nora and Laura.

Stage #3: Sustaining behaviors.

A pattern that we observed which seemed to help sustain initiative was what we coded as "centralized promotion and individualized implementation." This was a pattern of leadership that clearly promoted what McLaughlin (1979) labelled as "mutual adaptation." Committees, task forces and democratic teams were frequently used (with principal involvement) to do the early development work on an initiative. However, once the outline of the initiative had taken shape and the core values were articulated,

then maximum flexibility was delegated to the teachers to implement the program in whatever manner they determined best fit their grade level or particular classroom context. The collaborative action research process in each building was used to promote the sharing of adaptations, resulting in what amounted to a continuous public exalting of the "experimental process."

There were three other leadership behaviors we observed that had a clear impact on the building of a school culture which supported action research. While not directly related to either foundation building or the implementation of professional discourse. "Grandstanding and cheerleading" were activities used by these principals to acknowledge and celebrate core school values and faculty accomplishments. Both Laura and Clyde engaged in what we might classify as "grandstanding." This meant taking the floor to expound upon a position, to gloat, or maybe even to ridicule a district policy or procedure. They would do so to reinforce a core value or direction of the school. Our field notes don't reflect Nora ever using this strategy and upon reflection we suspect is simply wasn't in her repertoire.

"Cheerleading" on the other hand was a regular feature of the leadership of all three successful principals. It took many forms. Telling a visitor about an individual or team accomplishment in the presence of the person(s) responsible, presenting kudos in written bulletins or mailings, and informally acknowledging good work (frequently accompanied by a pat on the back) in the halls or faculty lounges are just a few examples.

Finally, humor was an essential component of the persona of each of these leaders. None of thee principals could be described as a comedian per se and their sense of humor differed significantly from each other. For example, Clyde and Laura regularly used biting humor and sarcasm while Nora's constant laughter served to convey a lighthearted perspective on those ambiguities that invade almost every nook and cranny of school life. Nevertheless, the sound of their laughter was a constant

identifiable feature of each school's environment. We suspect that humor made it safer to take the risks involved in researching your own work.

In the area of sustaining behaviors our multiple observers reached less agreement on what they observed at LaBelle, Milltown and Linberg. George was observed grandstanding, but it was viewed by some as supporting his "cronies" rather than celebrating genuine excellence of performance. Maryjean was observed using humor by one observer, but was seen as basically humorless by the other. Cheerleading per se wasn't observed as a regular behavior at Labelle, Milltown or Linberg.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to identify and illuminate those behaviors that the transformational leader uses to encourage and sustain a deep professional role change, the incorporation of collaborative action research into the work role of the K-12 teacher. While we can't generalize from six case studies, some patterns and non-patters did emerge.

Clyde and Jeff presented classically masculine styles, Nora and Maryjean classically feminine styles and Laura and George reflected what might be called a contemporary blend or an androgynous style. Nora, Laura, and Maryjean worked in elementary schools organized with self-contained classrooms while Clyde, George and Jeff lead departmentalized and compartmentalized secondary schools. All six schools served largely middle class families and each also served a number of handicapped learners. Riverview was one of 29 schools in a somewhat large and bureaucratic school district, while Wilton, Bedrock and Linberg were three of eight schools in an increasingly affluent suburban district. Labelle and Milltown were two of five schools in a small rural-suburban district.

All six principals were experienced, having reputations for serving successfully as principals in other buildings and districts and each was professionally self-confident. Except for Maryjean and Clyde, each had initiated their school's

involvement with Project LEARN. Each possessed and could articulate a defined educational philosophy.

In sum, the personality traits, experience and district contexts of these six principals didn't explain there success or failure. In terms of the classical distinctions in leadership style: task oriented and relationship oriented (Reddin 1970) they did display some differences. Maryjean was clearly relationship oriented and Jeff was focused on achieving the task. The other four had found a balance between these two extremes.

What, however, did seem to make working with three of these leaders transformational for teachers was the manner in which their leadership behavior influenced prevailing organizational culture and consequently the level of professional discourse in the respective buildings.

In that regard, the similarities of the leadership provided at Bedrock, Riverview and Wilton were in sharp contrast to that observed at Milltown and Linberg. In the three successful schools the leaders emphasized questioning over lecturing. By acknowledging "that they didn't know it all" but expressing a confidence that it could be known, they reinforced what Susan Rosenholtz (1990) called "teacher certainty." They utilized modelling as an effective instructional tool and behaved in a manner that created partnerships with teachers in pursuit of the teaching and learning process.

Most importantly they rewarded professionalism with "cheerleading" and saw to it that detrimental influences and people were quietly, effectively and carefully removed from the school. As a consequence, they were appreciated, if not credited for school improvements. The Bedrock and Riverview teachers were inclined to give their leader more credit for orchestrating their school culture, but even the self-confident Wilton staff admitted that Clyde effectively fostered collegial work.

The leadership at Labelle was a separate case. Perhaps the fact that Maryjean had inherited the collaborative action research project kept her from giving it the

nurturance and attention it required. Also, it is possible that her human relations approach simply takes more time to bear fruit. Regardless, her leadership profile on the 18 key behaviors neither mirrored the successful nor the less successful principals in this study.

Implications for Policy and Further Research

The 18 categories of behavior identified in this study call for further scrutiny. It would be helpful to see if these behaviors are employed by other school leaders in other teacher empowered schools and to examine nuances in these behaviors which could contribute to their potency. The theoretical model enunciated on the role of leadership as a method of mediating transformation/empowerment needs to be tested in other settings.

From this examination of six principals several thoughts emerge for consideration by policy leaders wishing to restructure the role of "teacher" to include collaborative inquiry.

First, schools need to be of manageable size if they are to be well lead. All three of the successful administrators had intimate knowledge of the teachers in their buildings, the programs offered, and the individual students attending their schools. This allowed them to fully participate in discussions and inquiries on the effectiveness of programs and instructional processes. By doing so they became research partners with their teachers in answering important questions regarding the teaching/learning process. These three principals maintained those partnerships with staffs and student bodies larger than many administrators could handle. However, even these talented individuals probably could not sustain these effective leadership behaviors in substantially larger schools. When schools get too large these many potent techniques which can foster the creation of transformative cultures will be ineffective.

Second, the mentorship may be the most valuable and least utilized tool for the preparation and development of transformational leaders. Teaching the nuances of

leading, specifically "easily taking care of business," and "supporting the teaching process" are not best done in an educational administration classroom. However, they may be learned from prolonged contact with master professionals. Clyde and Nora have served as mentors to numerous teachers they've worked with. At least ten successful current principals in the metropolitan area can trace their tutelage to these two leaders. Laura, although newer to the field, has already been sought out as a mentor by aspiring educators in her district. Finding ways to legitimate and facilitate this mode of on-site learning is clearly in the interest of the field.

Finally, we need to do more to educate aspiring administrators to the powerful influence played by organizational culture. It now appears likely that culture is the medium through which leaders have a transformative effect on followers. Future leaders need to understand both how to read organizational culture and how to lead schools in a manner that can have a positive influence upon cultural development. If we want the role of teacher to include the work of the practitioner/researcher we will need to become facile at managing school cultures so they can foster that role.

Warren Bennis (1990) observed that, "Empowerment is the collective effect of leadership." He went on to assert that the type of empowerment that flows from effective leaders can be seen in four themes: followers would feel significant, learning and competence would be valued, followers would feel they were part of a community, and the work that followers engage in would prove exciting. Those themes were clearly evident in the work environment at Riverview, Bedrock and Wilton. These schools had become learning organizations (Senge 1991) with teachers modeling the role of inquirer. The task now before us is to find ways to make those themes and the leadership that produced them, far more commonplace in our public schools.

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Table 1

Composite Quantitative Values for Cultural Collinearity

	Ratio SD<.75/14	Percentages
Riverview Elementary	14/14	100%
Bedrock Elementary	11/14	79%
Wilton Middle School	11/14	79%
LaBelle Elementary	9/14	64%
Milltown High School	7/14	50%
Lindberg High School	4/14	29%

Table 2

Cross-site Culture Survey Analysis

	Focus	Cultural Collinearity	Leadership Pressure	Leadership Support
Riverview Elementary	99	100	100	96
Bedrock Elementary	97	79	100	95
Wilton Middle School	82	79	100	90
LaBelle Elementary School	84	64	100	82
Milltown High School	59	50	62	74
Lindberg High School	67	29	92	74

Table 3

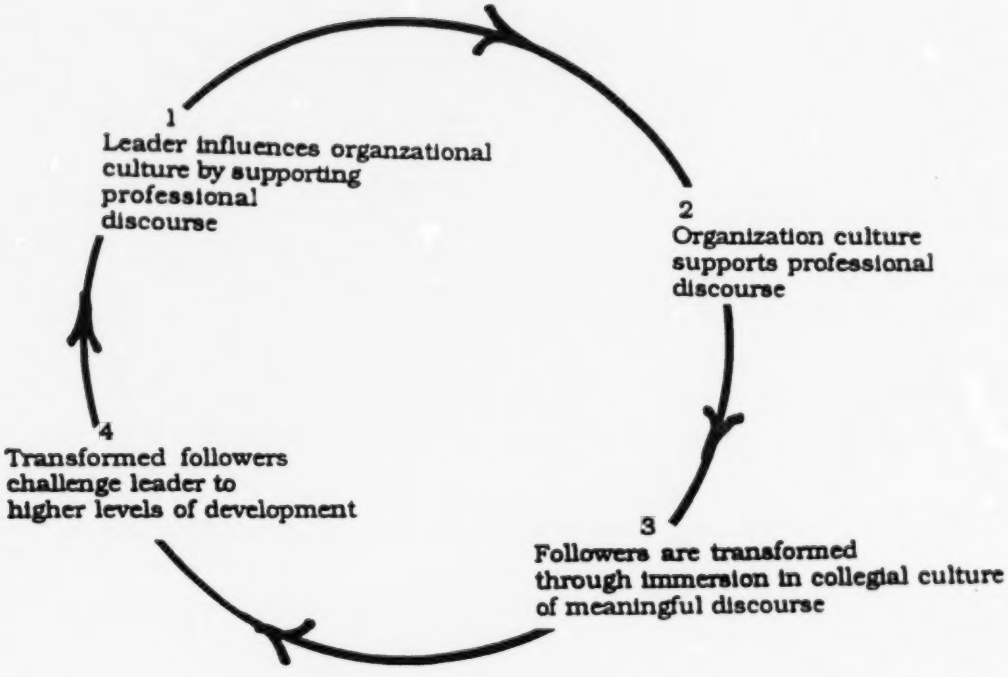
Observed and Reported Leadership Behavior

Stage 1: Preconditional	
1)	Buffering
2)	Easily Taking Care of Business
3)	Analyzing Data
4)	Disseminating Information
5)	Modeling
6)	Providing Growth Opportunities
7)	Opportunism (Resources)
8)	Caring
Stage 2: Development/Implementation	
9)	Not Knowing It All
10)	Flexible Determinism
11)	Supporting Teacher's Work
12)	Pitching Inn
13)	Visual Presence
14)	Asking Questions
15)	Answering With Questions
Stage 3: Sustaining Behavior	
16)	Grandstanding
17)	Humor
18)	Cheerleading

Table 4

OBSERVED AND REPORTED LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR	WILTON CLYDE	RIVERVIEW LAURA	BEDROCK NORA	LINDBERG GEORGE	MILLTOWN JEFF	LA BELLE M./JEAN
STAGE 1 Pre-Conditional						
1) Buffering	x	x	x			x
2) Easily Taking Care of Business	x	x	x	x		
3) Analzying Data	x	x	x	x	x	
4) Disseminating Information	x	x	x	x	x	
5) Modeling	x	x	x			x
6) Providing Growth Opportunities	x	x	x		x	x
7) Opportunism (Resources)	x	x	x	x	x	x
8) Caring	x	x	x			x
STAGE 2 Development/Implementation						
9) Not Knowing It All	x	x	x			x
10) Flexible Determinism	x	x	x			x
11) Supporting Teacher's Work	x	x	x			x
12) Pitching In	x	x	x			x
13) Visual Presence	x	x	x			x
14) Asking Questions	x	x	x		x	x
15) Answering with Questions	x	x	x		x	x
STAGE 3 Sustaining Behavior						
16) Grandstanding	x	x				
17) Humor	x	x	x			
18) Cheerleading	x	x	x			

Figure 1


1
Leader influences organzational culture by supporting professional discourse
2
Organization culture supports professional discourse
3
Followers are transformed through immersion in collegial culture of meaningful discourse
4
Transformed followers challenge leader to higher levels of development